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ABSTRACT

Notions of white supremacy, racism, sexism, and patriarchy constitute the power relationships and hierarchical structures of colonialism. Power is accessed when certain cultural forms are made to prevail over others, thus producing racialized and marginalized identities. The will to control what is different is the main tenet of colonialism. European supremacy is based on the civilized/uncivilized dichotomy. The colonizers are depicted as advanced, the colonized as backward. This dichotomy permits ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality, supports dominance and control, and is also used to define male/female power relations. Colonialism is sustained by an intimate relationship with education and government. In Canada, subjugation of Indigenous peoples by armed conflict was followed by the establishment of residential boarding schools and the implementation of the Indian Act of 1876. Resisting colonialism requires that those that are "othered," excluded, or discriminated against examine how they participate in their own oppression. Decolonizing the mind summons the capacity to think oneself out of the position of "other." Indigenous people have been silenced. They must transform their lives through intellectual awareness, critical self-reflection, and self-analysis, and become critically engaged in the dominant discourse. Cultural revitalization has been a response to colonization, but it is limiting because valorization of the past keeps those dichotomies essential to cultural hegemony intact. Resistance must move from a cultural position to a political one and analyze and challenge the issues of racism and power. (Contains 14 references.) (TD)

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Post-colonial Recovering and Healing

Angelina Weenie

Naming and defining the problem is the first step toward post-colonial recovering and healing. This paper addresses issues of racism, oppression, feminism, and resistance theory within the context of colonialism. This paper derives from the author's desire to work toward effective change in Canadian First Nations' education.

I speak from the position of an Aboriginal woman, a single parent, and an educator. These identities are shaped by various social, political, and economic contexts and have named me as the "other." My history denotes me as a colonized person. By virtue of the Canadian Indian Act of 1876, I am considered a ward of the Federal Government. I am implicated in the dichotomies of colonizer/colonized, oppressor/oppressed, male/female. These binaries depend upon "essentialized" notions of race, class, and gender.

The colonial encounter has been devastating to tribal peoples, and a reawakening is timely and necessary. Resistance, as part of decolonization, is as much a personal struggle as it is a group struggle. Resistance is analogous to extricating oneself from an abusive relationship. One must break through the denial and begin the process of recovery and healing. It means unlearning what we have been taught about ourselves and learning to value ourselves.

Emancipatory projects require a critical study of the colonial structures of domination and oppression. Resisting colonialism entails a reasoned and critical analysis of the systematic and systemic practices that exclude certain groups from full and equal participation in mainstream society. The underlying assumptions and apparatus of those ideologies and practices where the "other" is necessary need to be disclosed and challenged. The premise of this analysis is to explore how resistance is possible within colonialism.

What is colonialism?

Colonialism is manifested through the "configurations of power" (Said, 1994, p. 133) that worked and still work to control indigenous lands and populations. Notions of white supremacy, racism, sexism, and patriarchy constitute the power relationships and hierarchical structures within the colonial endeavor.

It is within the ideology of Orientalism that colonialism will first be considered. Orientalism is "a whole series of 'interests' which...creates but also maintains...a certain will or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, and even incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world" (Said, 1994, p. 138). It is an obsession with the Orient or the "other," wherein cultural hegemony occurs. Power is accessed when certain cultural forms are made to prevail over others, thus producing racialized and marginalized identities (Chow, 1993).

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European supremacy is based on the civilized/uncivilized dichotomy, and it effectively justifies colonization. The colonizers are depicted as the advanced civilization, while the colonized are depicted as backward nations. This conception permits "ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality" (Said, 1994, p. 144). Racial and cultural differences are the markers and boundaries used to subordinate. Assumptions of racial difference are sanctioned on "the boundary notion of East and West" (Said, 1994, p. 140). The West is associated with superiority, and the East is represented as primitive, weak, and in need of salvation.

The advanced/backward dichotomy works effectively to support dominance and control (Said, 1994). It is also used to define male/female power relations. Men are epitomized as "the progressive agent[s]" and women are signified as "inert, backward-looking and natural" (McClintock, 1995, p. 359) in parallel to the dichotomies of civilized/uncivilized that colonialism perpetrates. Césaire (1972, p. 177) equates colonization with "thingification." The native and the woman are objectified and seen as lacking, further justifying the bases of relationships of domination and submission.

Colonialism gets its support from schools and governments, and coercion and even "hideous butcheries" (Césaire, 1972, p. 176) secure the colonialist project. Wa Thiong'o (1986) interprets the establishment of colonialism as where "the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and blackboard" (p. 9). Colonialism is sustained by an intimate relationship with education, imperialism, and capitalism. In the Canadian experience, subjugation was carried out through armed conflict, the establishment of the residential (boarding) school system, and the implementing of the Indian Act of 1876.

The principles of patriarchy, racism, and sexism function together to center power with men and with white people. These principles are the roots of unequal power relationships and clarify how certain groups came to be subordinated. Colonialism is organized around male control and a fixated view of the "other." Male ascendancy is explained in the "male conception of the world...where women [become] the creatures of a male power-fantasy" (Said, 1994, p. 145). This notion resembles the colonizer's desire to "penetrate and possess the other" (Said, 1994, p. 148). The will to claim and control what is different is the main tenet of colonialism.

Colonialism is a "willed human work" (Said, 1994, p. 140). It is purposed and determined by human desire and intention, and we are all implicated. We participate in our own oppression in complex and contradictory ways. Césaire (1972, p. 176) states that "no one colonizes innocently," and hooks (1992) maintains that "none of us are passive victims of socialization" (p. 14). There is no innocent space and the self is self-determining. We as humans can effect change, change that is moderated by power relations as we are not all equally positioned.

Césaire (1972) characterizes colonialism as a product of a sick society, a "pseudo-humanism" that "diminished the rights of man" (p. 174). It dehumanizes and destroys the human spirit without impunity. The space of the tribal peoples becomes merely "*geographical space* [to be] penetrated, worked over, taken hold of" (Said, 1994, p. 148).

Colonialism is organized around "essentializing" notions of race, class, and gender. The dominant group defines what is normal. Colonialism is a social construction, and its body of theory is created from Orientalism. It has no significance on its own, as it is defined only in relation to the "other." This feature of colonialism creates a space for agency and change.

Critique of whiteness

Whiteness is a visible marker of what has come to be accepted as superior. The deconstruction of whiteness as a sign superiority and the celebration of our difference is advocated as "a revolutionary intervention" by hooks (1992, p. 20). She asserts that a discourse on whiteness would facilitate the analysis of conventional assumptions about race. Anti-racism projects need to challenge white supremacy and "white racist paradigms." Part of the process of unlearning racism is to recognize that all of our history has been defined from the white standpoint. Lorde (1981) characterizes racism as "that terror and loathing of any difference" (p. 101), and this is the issue that white people need to address.

Valuing ourselves and our difference empowers us and facilitates the deconstruction of whiteness. Our difference should be held "like a jewel high out of envious reach of those who would either destroy it or claim it as their own" (Marshall, 1983, p. 139). We have to be relentless against white supremacy and racism. Like colonialism, whiteness has no place of its own and is defined only in relation to the "other."

Decolonizing the mind

An articulation of resistance requires an examination of how we participate in our own oppression. Decolonizing the mind summons the capacity to think oneself out of the position of "other" (Wa Thiong'o, 1986). Intellectual awareness, critical self-reflection, and self-analysis are ways of transforming our lives. Those that are othered, excluded, or discriminated against have to effect their own cures (Parry, 1994). Fanon (1963, p. 230) states that "the body of history does not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation." We are not victims. Individually and collectively we are responsible for ourselves within the structures we live.

Acknowledging the interrelationships of colonialism, racism, and oppression and employing a race, class, and gender analysis to all areas of our existence is a way of decolonizing the mind. We have been made to feel silenced, and we must begin questioning and becoming critically engaged in dominant discourse. The native intellectual has "to mark off the field" (Fanon, 1963, p. 227) and find his way out of the dichotomies that position him as one of the oppressed and marginalized.

We have to interrogate Western thought and be unwilling to confirm what the powerful have to say. Decolonizing our minds by way of breaking with "white supremacist thinking that suggests we are inferior, inadequate, and marked by victimization" is a strategy of resistance (hooks, 1992, p. 17). Positive affirmation and self-acceptance can help us to overcome the negative messages of who we are, but collective action is also necessary.

Cultural nationalism as resistance

The construction of national culture has been a response to colonization. The site of the struggle has been fixed on the culture. Cultural nationalism and cultural revitalization reflect the revival of pre-colonial cultures and the "valorized viewpoint" presented by Chow (1993). Valorizing the past and attempting to correct "the defiled, degraded images" of the past is limiting (Chow, 1993, p. 30). Valorization serves to keep those dichotomies of colonized/colonizer, essential to cultural hegemony, intact.

Fanon (1963) critiques the dangers of national consciousness, and he proposes that existing decolonizing practices follow the same logic of colonialism. Parry (1994) maintains that cultural nationalism is a "reverse ethnocentrism which simply reproduces existing categories" (p. 180). However, valorization should not be dismissed so easily. Cultural affirmation should be considered as a necessary phase of resistance. It is a place of beginning. Affirming our identities and cultures and concomitantly acknowledging the need for social change is a more tenable approach.

Theoretical perspectives are varied because colonial discourse is paradoxical. The key principle is that the claiming of difference corresponds with the colonialist and racist paradigm. Resistance, to be truly constructive, calls for the dismantling "of the master's house" and discovering where the power lies (Lorde, 1981). Dismantling and deconstructing the master's house implies that we have to confront and challenge the hierarchies.

Forms of oppression are complex and not easily eliminated. Resistance has been evidenced mainly through silence and passivity. Fanon (1963, p. 207) claims that "They fought as well as they could," and in some instances First Nations' people did stage an armed resistance. More importantly, however, resistance needs to focus on redefining relationships. This concept is central to the construction of a theory of resistance.

Indigenous women, feminism, and a theory of resistance

White feminists, coming from a relatively privileged position, do not reflect the experiences of indigenous women. While the feminist movement developed in response to gender oppression and inequality, indigenous women have historically played a prominent role in resistance and continue to provide leadership to their communities. Indigenous women generally reject feminist views. One of the areas of disagreement is with "the tidy (if grossly misleading and divisive) male/female, warlike/peaceful dichotomies deployed by feminist thinkers" (Jaimes & Halsey, 1997, p. 303). The problems confronting indigenous women are related to white supremacy and colonialism. Racial and colonialist paradigms are the constituents of indigenous struggle, and any involvement with feminism would only perpetuate exploitation (Jaimes & Halsey, 1997).

Thus far I have been discussing resistance as "reverse-discourse" based on "counter-identification and disidentification," the analysis that is used by Parry (1994, pp. 172 & 176). Reverse discourse meets with little success, as has al-

ready been stated, because it attempts to work within the colonial framework. Cultural forms inhibit the resistance process. Cultural nationalism is an element of the reverse discourse and change is restricted because race, class, and gender issues are overlooked. Patriarchal positioning and power are retained in the Western discourse. Coombe (1997) maintains that "to bypass issues of racism and power is to contribute to the process" (p. 91). This is the key component of a theoretical and philosophical view of resistance.

Resistance can be envisioned on "a progression from nativist through nationalist to liberation theory" as suggested by Edward Said (Parry, 1994, p. 180), moving from a cultural to a political position. A theory of resistance can be constructed on the acknowledgment of the mechanisms and systems of beliefs that ensure relationships of domination and submission and a reflection of how race, gender, and class are shaped. It involves the study of the constructed images of East and West and the essentialist notion of the self. A theory of resistance embodies an analysis of these processes.

The process of enlightenment begins when we can define the problem of colonization properly and when we understand that oppression is never complete. Power relations are shifting, not constant. There are always spaces of resistance. Essentialist notions of culture, language, and identity have to be deconstructed. To recognize that dominant space, like colonialism and whiteness, is ambiguous and has no essence except in relation to the naming of the "other" is to be able to transcend it. The native intellectual moves to find the way out and looks for spaces where resistance can happen.

Colonialism was carried out through physical and psychological violence (Wa Thiong'o, 1986). It supplanted the existing cultures of tribal peoples, and it brought irrevocable change. We have been naive in thinking that we had simply to revive our languages and cultures. The problem is all-pervasive. Anti-racism projects, as part of post-colonial discourse, are an unremitting concern. Expressions of racism and oppression change but they do not disappear. The resisting post-colonial voice confronts our histories of colonialism and the relations of power that continue to shape social relations of difference (Coombe, 1997).

Concluding remarks

Racism is corrosive; it contaminates every part of our being, mind, body, and spirit (Memmi, 1968). Racism comes in many forms, but my experiences in an integrated school in the mid-sixties were probably the most indelible and damaging for me. I was made to feel ashamed because of my race. I trace my feelings of inferiority and inadequacy to my early school experiences because of the manner in which my history, culture, and language were devalued and excluded from the curriculum. There was much to be angry about and that anger was directed inward.

Any exclusion of my full and equal participation in mainstream society is not acceptable and deconstructing notions of racism, sexism, and white supremacy begins the process of individual and collective liberation. This analysis of resistance theory within colonialism has evolved through my desire to work toward

effective change and to ensure that my children and grandchildren are never denied full and equal participation.

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